Open Borders: a Threat or an Opportunity?

An interview with Daniel Sharp

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In the political discourse in Eastern Europe, there is the narrative of migration being treated as a form of hybrid war exercised by Russia and Belarus. In your paper, you describe this and similar phenomena as migration blackmail. Can you say a few words about this concept?

DS: I take the term *migration blackmail* from the international relations scholar Gerasimos Tsourapas. Blackmailing is a tool of interstate bargaining that arises in a specific way concerning migration. When one state blackmails another, it is engaging in a non-cooperative bargaining strategy, where it threatens to impose a cost on a neighboring state in order to achieve some diplomatic or political aim. In migration blackmail, one state threatens to manipulate a migration flow, or 'flood' another state with refugees, in order to extract some concessions. In the case of Belarus, Russia and Latvia, the situation started back in 2021 after the Ryanair air flight 4978 was forced to land in Belarus so that Lukashenko could arrest Belarusian journalist Roman Protasevich and sanctions were imposed by the EU. Lukashenko – I think largely acting in his own interest, although it is very unclear how to understand his relationship with Russia – said quite explicitly: "Look, we've been stopping migrants for you. Now you will catch them

yourselves unless you lift these sanctions."[1] So, the initial situation was a clear bargaining strategy. Now, how one analyses the aims of the Belarusian state and how one understands the relationship between Russia and Belarus is a little bit murkier. But, I think, there are still some broader diplomatic aims at work. Part of that is undermining trust and solidarity within the EU; part of that may be trying to weaken support for intervention in Ukraine.

Another thing that is helpful about migration blackmail as a frame is that it brings out to people living in the Baltic states that this is not a phenomenon that only happens in the Baltic region. As Kelly Greenhill – the scholar who introduced this concept of hybrid war and weaponizing migration – put it, what Lukashenko is doing is not remotely original.[2] Other states have done it as well. Think about the Gaddafi regime threatening the EU to receive various funds,[3] or Turkey in 2015,[4] or even Greece during the financial crisis years.[5] It is routine for transit states to use migration for diplomatic purposes. And the migration blackmail frame allows us to locate this wider context.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the situation at the Belarussian border has changed since 2021. It is no longer clear to what degree Belarus is actively challenging onward mobility to the EU. Aleksandra Ancite-Jepifánova has done extensive empirical work on this issue, interviewing numerous people who have used this migration route.[6] She finds little evidence of significant state involvement in directing migration flows. Rather, movement is largely due to informal smuggling networks and the individual decisions of migrants.

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1 Milne, Richard; Shotter, James (2021). Belarus 'weaponising' illegal migration, Lithuania says. *Financial Times*, 15.06. Available: https://www.ft.com/content/0ad28032-6102-41a0-ad8d-b80460e52867?syn-25a6b1a6=1 [Accessed 26.10.2026].

2 Greenhill, Kelly M. (2022). When Migrants Become Weapons. *Foreign Affairs*, 22.02. Available: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2022-02-22/when-migrants-become-weapons [Accessed 29.06.2026].

3 *Gaddafi Wants EU Cash to Stop African Migrants. BBC News*, 31.08.2010. Available: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11139345 [Accessed 29.06.2026].

4 Tsourapas, Gerasimos (2019). The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Foreign Policy Decision-Making in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, No. 4(4), pp. 464–81. https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogz016

5 Tsourapas, Gerasimos; Zartaloudis, Sotirios (2022). Leveraging the European Refugee Crisis: Forced Displacement and Bargaining in Greece's Bailout Negotiations. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies,* No. 60(2), pp. 245–263. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13211

6 Ancite-Jepifánova, Aleksandra (2024). Beyond the 'Hybrid Attack' Paradigm: EU-Belarus Border Crisis and the Erosion of Asylum-Seeker Rights in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. *Avant: Trends in Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 15(2), pp. 1–26. https://doi.org/10.26913/ava2202405

There are differences between the notion of blackmail and the notion of hybrid war. The one that comes to my mind is the idea that blackmail has a specific goal, whereas hybrid war is just a harmful action.

DS: That is basically right. I have some reservations about using the hybrid war frame. But even war is often tactical in a sense. There are specific aims that different states want to extract from one another. I think the blackmail term better captures this bargaining aspect. But, again, both frames can be useful for certain purposes and highlighting certain aspects, and you could apply other frames as well to understand the situation.

Perhaps the framework of hybrid war also makes it sound difficult to rationalize, whereas the blackmail framework explains the reasons behind these actions. One consequence of this blackmail is strengthening the physical borders in Latvia. The borders are heavily militarized and the events that take place on those borders often violate human rights and EU asylum and migration law. You advocate prioritizing migrants' interests. How do you see it as not giving in to blackmail?

DS: I think there is a strategic and a moral way to answer this question. I will start with the strategic first, because I think that might have more pull on people. I think it is important to understand the nature of the cost that states like Belarus want to impose on the EU. Part of what Belarus wants to do is impose what some people have called hypocrisy costs on the European Union.[7] That is, they want to make visible that the EU doesn't live up to its proclaimed moral values in how it responds to migration. That undermines the EU's credibility on the world stage. Putin has made this pretty explicit. He said something like, whatever you may accuse Belarus of doing, what the European Union authorities in Latvia, Poland, etc. do is far worse. And this is one reason why responding with pushbacks, border violence, and allowing people to die in the forest hurts Europe's image and why a welcoming response, in contrast, can signal that the blackmail tactic won't work. Objectively speaking, if states in the Baltic region were willing to organize protection for refugees efficiently and integrate them, every labor economist would tell you that this would not be a burdensome process.[8] It is a declining population with demographic problems. Migrants are mostly younger and mostly able to work in host societies. I don't think meeting refugees with open arms is really capitulating to blackmail. I think it is the other way around.

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7 Yeliseyeu, Andrei (2025). Belarus' Migration Policies and Instrumentalization of Migrants. Kazharski, Aliaksei (ed.). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Belarus*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003501497-16

8 Portes, Jonathan (2019). The Economics of Migration. *Contexts*, No. 18(2), pp. 12–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504219854712

But more important than the strategic issue for me is the moral issue.[9] Most of the people who are entering via Belarus have legitimate claims to asylum. And all of them at least have a right to file an asylum application to determine how their claims should be assessed. They face persecution or violence in their home countries. Closing the border effectively displaces the cost of this interstate conflict onto individuals seeking protection. Migrants and refugees are not culpable combatants. This is why I think the hybrid war frame is very problematic. It encourages this militarized response to people.[10] They are people with legitimate reasons to move, whose claims should be assessed, and who don't have other options to get international protection. I don't think it is fair to impose this extra burden on them just for the sake of resisting blackmail, even if, as I think is true, and as I've argued, states like Latvia do have a legitimate interest in not being subject to external interference from Belarus and Russia. That is absolutely true. But I don't think that should come at the cost of the lives of individual people on the border. The result of the current politics is that about 150 people along the Eastern border have died of starvation, injury, exposure, etc.[11] I just don't think that ordinary Latvians' interest in excluding people can really justify imposing such a burden on people, especially people who don't have a real option to go home.

Don't you think that these broad narratives of hybrid war and migration blackmail obscure the individual agency that is at stake in those cases?

DS: Yes, exactly. It is hard to get a unified picture of what is going on in each individual case. There is this oscillation in the discussion between viewing migrants as pure tools or collaborators with the Belarusian state and viewing people as passive victims of Belarussian maleficence. Both are likely misleading and the hybrid war frame ends up obscuring the underlying reasons why many of these people find themselves in Belarus in the first place. This is a point Aleksandra Ancite-Jepifánova[12] has emphasized in her recent response to my work on migration blackmail. She finds that for many people who enter the EU via Belarus, onward movement to the EU was a later decision, prompted by insecure living conditions in Russia.

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9 Sharp, Daniel (2025). Can States Resist Migration Blackmail While Protecting Migrants? *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, No. 30(2), pp. 295–328. https://doi.org/10.26556/jesp.v30i2.3519

10 Bender, Felix (2021). Against 'Weaponised Migration'. *Social Europe*, 10.11. Available: https://www.socialeurope.eu/against-weaponised-migration [Accessed 29.06.2026].

11 List of the Deceased – Stowarzyszenie. We Are Monitoring (2024). 31.10. Available: https://wearemonitoring.org.pl/en/list-of-the-deceased/ [Accessed 29.06.2026].

12 Ancite-Jepifánova, Aleksandra (2025). Migration Blackmail and Instrumentalisation as Justifications for Deterrence and Exclusion: A Response to Sharp. Commentary for *The Ethics of Migration Policy Dilemmas project*, Migration Policy Centre (MPC), European University Institute (EUI), 2026.

There is also another concept in EU law, the instrumentalization concept, which, in theory, looks better because it might seem that, in some cases, Belarus is using these people as a mere means for its political ends. The provisions on instrumentalization incorporated in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) reform[13] are often rhetorically justified in order to "protect" migrants from being used as a means by states like Belarus. But what these provisions do is violate people's rights – using extended detection, assessing asylum claims in sham fast-track processes. "Instrumentalization" is used explicitly in the recent CEAS reform to justify derogations from various responsibilities that one normally has towards asylum seekers.

These ways of framing the crisis are much too black and white. They don't take seriously why people accept the offer to go to Belarus to take this migration route in the first place. And they don't take seriously the reality of people's claims for international protection. We need more complicated, migrant-centered ways of framing what is going on at the border that also capture more of the ambiguity and agency of people involved.

You mentioned the possible societal or perhaps economic benefits for such a small, demographically decreasing nation-state as Latvia. But, to counter this narrative, in the public discourse there is this idea that exactly because we are numerically few, migration, particularly large-scale migration, is seen as a threat to the preservation of Latvian identity.

DS: Obviously, the situation in a state like Latvia is very different from the situation in a state like the U.S., which has almost 300 times the number of people. I don't want to deny that taking in people from different cultures involves cultural change and some process of mutual adjustment: Latvians adapting to their new neighbors, people who are settling in Latvia adapting to Latvian culture. I understand the feelings of people in the Baltic region who worry about their distinctive culture and values changing through that process. But at the same time, we need to think about what we can justify on grounds of preserving a national culture or way of life and, additionally, what preserving it ultimately involves. Even if Latvia never let in anyone from any other cultural context, Latvian society is going to change over time. The world changes, and part of what having a healthy and robust culture means is adapting past traditions to new circumstances, to having a changing population. I don't think most Latvians feel that at any moment Latvian society and culture is going to collapse. I think there are legitimate concerns in some ways, and I do understand them, but I don't think this existential "Latvian society will no longer exist" frame is helpful for grappling with the actual problems like: how do I engage with my new neighbors from Pakistan? How, if at all, should we encourage immigrants to learn the Latvian language? Those are the questions that I think are worth thinking about.

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13 Jacques Delors Centre. *Instrumentalisation of Migration: Europe Needs a Strong and Lawful Response.* Available: https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/detail/publication/instrumentalisation-of-migration [Accessed 29.06.2026].

I agree with you. I'm just unsure whether I agree with the statement that this is not what perhaps even the majority of the population thinks. Just this morning I read an article about how admitting Muslim refugees will result in Riga being fully Islamized in the next ten years or so.

DS: I think that is common throughout Europe. Frankly, in the United States as well, you get the same discourse – such fears that people on the far-right use about fundamental cultural changes that will happen immediately. Part of the challenge is combating those kinds of anxieties and separating out the understandable fears and uncertainties that people have about social and cultural change from these more doom-and-gloom pictures that you sometimes get. That is challenging.

And society seems to polarize over those matters to the greatest extent. Moving on, I wanted to ask you about the concept of borders more generally. How do you understand it? How do you understand the interplay between borders and security?

DS: Let me start with your question about what borders are. Normally, when we are thinking about borders, our mind is drawn to the geographical line on a map, the thing that you can build a fence along, as Latvia is doing. But when it comes to understanding what border control is, that is a highly misleading way to think about borders. The term border as it is used in border control is better understood as part of a dynamic process of control. Most border controls for Latvia take place hundreds of miles from the Latvian border. And this was true even before all these recent technological interventions. For example, if a person from Afghanistan wants to enter Latvia on an *AirBaltic* flight without a visa, *AirBaltic* is going to be fined if they let that person board the plane and land in Latvia. This is because of "carrier sanctions," fines on airlines who allow people to travel without a visa. And Latvia is not going to issue a visa for that person to get on a plane in the first place. All this is a process of border control that takes place way before anyone even attempts to reach the border in Latvia. Similarly, when the EU pays militias in Libya to keep people from crossing the Mediterranean to Italy, that is a process of border control done at the behest of the EU,[14] but it is done via these proxies and far away from the territorial borders of the EU. So, I think we need to think about borders as technologies of power and control that are aimed at keeping people out or letting certain people in. Our understanding of borders as territorial can mislead us about the way that border controls actually function.

Now, the second part of your question was about the relationship between borders and security. In general, borders bear a quite complicated relationship to the idea of security. We shouldn't think of any border crossing as automatically a security threat. Using this frame as the predominant way in which we understand human mobility just

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14 openDemocracy (2025). *Europe Is Paying Libya to Torture Migrants on Its Behalf*. 13.12. Available: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/libya-eu-migration-torture-detainment-europe-asylum-boats-mediterranean-search-rescue-boats-humanity-1/ [Accessed 29.06.2026].

distorts the fact that the majority of people who cross borders pose no real threat to anyone. On the other hand, there are cases where border openness is an enabler of security. Think of the European Union as a project. It is built on this thought that if we allow freedom of movement, we are going to have a safer, more secure Europe. That is not to say that there are not cases where individual people crossing a border or two states that are in a territorial dispute or in ongoing war cannot be matters of security. But understanding migration in general primarily through the lens of security, much like understanding migration in general primarily through the lens of warfare, ends up seriously distorting the response that we should take towards migration. We come to see everyone who crosses a border or who fits a certain profile as inherently risky. And that is the thing that seems to justify in people's minds these draconian border control policies, which we've seen all throughout Europe.

Don't you think that that is a fairly common conception of security and borders?

DS: Yes, absolutely. But I think it is not inevitable, nor has it been the case throughout history. In earlier times, the very idea of the nation-state border was much looser. The primary way that states related to population mobility was to try to recruit populations into their borders to settle. Similarly, if you think of the history of the US-Mexico border, which has been this site of intense securitization, that border used to be pretty open and wasn't viewed by people who lived in the borderlands as presenting any serious security risk. Obviously, the world has changed since then. But the idea that we should view the border as an insecurity-producing space is fairly historically specific and has increased in the last 20-25 years or so in a way that it wasn't present before.

That was another thing you have argued for, namely, that there is a certain asymmetry in closed-border policy.

DS: Exactly. If you think about which states are controlling their borders and how, and you look at Central America, all of the intense border controls are pointing South, so to speak, trying to stop mobility North. This whole process is about preventing poor people from the Global South from moving along a certain migration route into the United States. Each state is trying to keep them out, usually at the behest of the United States, not so much of its own initiative. You see a similar dynamic with the EU border pushing outwards into North Africa, into the Middle East, throughout geographic space. It is all to stop mobility from the Global South to the Global North. At the very least, Europeans should be aware of the underlying reasons why people from the Global South want to move to the Global North. What might European policies and histories of their engagements with other people in other parts of the world have to do with those situations that are motivating people to move, in the first place?

Well, one conception is treating them as economic migrants. And that can be utilized in favor of closed border policies.

DS: Exactly. I think the term *economic migrant* primarily serves to claim that people who fall within that category are not genuine refugees and don't have claims to lodge an

asylum claim. There are two things to bear in mind about this category. First, there are scholars of refugee law who argue that we should understand some people's economic mobility – especially in cases where people are fleeing really intense forms of global poverty – as similar to the kinds of reasons that drive people who are facing persecution to move. These are often people who can't meet their basic needs, who are extremely insecure, even if the source of the threat is different. Second, even if it is not the case that these people have the special claims that refugees have, that doesn't mean they have no claims at all. They are individuals with human dignity, often extremely vulnerable people, who are leaving precarious situations. Just dismissing them out of hand as just economic migrants fails to take seriously what it is like to live in poverty or what it is like to face economic deprivation. It is very convenient to dismiss claims on those grounds, but it obscures a much broader public discussion that should be happening about what we in the Global North owe to people in the Global South.

You also argue that the open border policy does not undermine the self-determination of a country. Can you say a bit more about how that is not the case?

DS: Good. Some people think that any self-governing entity or self-governing group necessarily have a right to exclude, a right to control their borders. But when we think a little bit longer, conceptually speaking, this is not true. Think of Riga: Riga is a municipality, but Riga doesn't have the authority to determine who lives in Riga and who doesn't. That is determined at the level of Latvia. Nevertheless, Riga can exercise lots of control, make various laws, direct public spending, determine rules about residence and housing, etc. At a conceptual level, there is no *necessary* link between Riga's exclusionary borders and self-determination. Now, if we take self-determination seriously, then, in some cases, there are going to be costs that come from having more open forms of mobility. But I don't think that the right way to frame those costs is to say that states in general need this broad discretionary right to exclude anyone whom they don't want to let in. Rather, the better way to think about it is that certain forms of mobility come with real social costs. And when there is a serious risk that those costs might be triggered – when, for example, a huge influx of people might be involved – then I think states can think about conditionally exercising some forms of control over who may enter. But we need not think that in order to be self-determining, states must always be in the business of policing who may enter and who may exit.

In the history of philosophy, it is a very common idea that you build your identity on negating what you are not to some extent. I wonder whether this dialectic is important for at least national identity, even if not political self-determination.

DS: I think a basic feature of identity construction is that you have in-groups and you have out-groups, and those are defined somewhat oppositionally. You are what you are not. But that doesn't settle who is the in-group and who is the out-group. It has been a tendency in a lot of European states to move from these more political conceptions of identity, where the 'we' or the 'people' who are doing the self-determining, is something

like 'all of the individuals who live together in a place organized politically using their democratic rights', to more ethnic or nationality-based conceptions of the group. I find that move very problematic. The mere fact that people who live in Latvia need to collectively govern their lives together and make rules democratically and want to all have some say over the course of events that go on in Latvia, doesn't entail that we should understand identity through a predominantly national frame. Although it is true that most people who live in Latvia are ethnically and linguistically Latvian, not everyone is. Having multiple identities has been a feature of every society everywhere. At a minimum, if we are going to have nation-states, they need to be in some minimal sense open to accommodating and welcoming people who don't fit the dominant national frame. In this context, sometimes the use of nation-states, where the emphasis is on the *nation*, can be quite problematic. And it is taken advantage of in far-right identity politics, really effectively, unfortunately.

Do you think that any such identity core is necessary? Perhaps not a language, nationality, or ethnicity, but do you think that there is something that unites people living in the same country besides them living in the same country?

DS: Perhaps. Philosophers who think about the idea of self-determination often distinguish more national from more political or procedural conceptions of what self-determination involves. At a minimum, if a group is going to exercise shared control over their political lives, they must, at some level, be willing to live together, have relationships, and allegiance to common political institutions. In that sense, there has to be some intention or willingness to cooperate democratically. But I don't think you need much more than that. Obviously, cooperating can generate some identity where you see yourself as a member of a particular polity. But I think that doesn't have to be associated with the more strongly national connotations. Although, again, I think, in the Latvian context, where you have a small group and a particular history, a particular strong external threat on your borders, I have more understanding for this tendency than in the context of the U.S.

That is another thing that you hear quite often that it is easy for the big political and economic powers to exercise such politics, and the same shouldn't be asked from such small nations.

DS: I agree to some extent. You might think that these are two separate questions regarding self-determination and why it matters. One thing we might be talking about is a group exercising border control to preserve its national identity or its culture over time. Another thing we might be talking about is ensuring that members of our group are not dominated by powerful outsiders, in the Latvian case, the threat of Russia, for example. I think those are two different conceptions of the value of self-determination. I have a lot of sympathy with the non-domination idea – that a free people require a free state that is not subject to the arbitrary will of an imperial power. That is the self-determination that people are motivated by in anti-colonial struggles, and also that people were

motivated by in the Latvian independence movement. But that is very different from this other conception of self-determination, with an exclusive 'we', where it is defined nationally who needs to be kept maximally far to preserve our culture at the expense of all else.

Do you think that there is an interplay between the two conceptions? I mean, distinctions are helpful, but I wonder if they are not more integrated. In particular, I was thinking about polarization and media, which, to a certain extent, operate on the identity level. But on the other hand, we can see how it plays an enormous role in politics.

DS: Yes, even in the anti-colonial case, it is not an accident that people organized in the idiom of national culture to resist colonial domination. There is an understandable conflation between these two ends, and there are ways in which a shared cultural identity can facilitate forms of cooperation that are socially useful for that purpose. But I do think it is helpful to distinguish between what we ultimately care about when we care about self-determination. Do we care about preserving a unified national culture or about preventing domination? Those are two different things. Some people might care about one, some about the other. I think we have more reason to care about the domination part than we do about the exclusive national culture part.

How do you think the recent technological developments have impacted our understanding of borders and this exclusionist policy? To some extent, it seems odd to stick to the idea of closed borders, given the enormous information exchange.

DS: Obviously, technology has changed how borders function. It has given states, for example, the capacity to have digital and biometric screening processes, as well as the capacity to do all kinds of border surveillance. You have drones flying in the Mediterranean trying to intercept ships. So, technology can be used to increase the degree of control that states have. On the other side, it has also done the opposite. You had this drone case in Latvia that you mentioned. You have Russian cyber-attacks, attacking servers and data that are located in Latvia, although how we understand data and cyber borders is a separate issue. Technology is changing both the way in which people transgress borders and also the way in which border control operates. What this really brings out is the complexity of bordering as a process.

It is important to bear in mind that when we think about border controls and technology, what we are often thinking about is not exclusion and keeping stuff out, but actually what most states and most people want is some sort of filtering. They let in desirable forms of mobility, such as people crossing in from other EU member states into Latvia. They try to keep out "undesirable" forms of mobility, whether that is people entering from Belarus or Russian cyber-attacks. I think there is a conversation to be had about what forms of mobility are worth filtering out and why, and what ideological nationalist or racist presuppositions are involved in labeling one form of mobility or another "desirable" or "undesirable".

In a recent publication,[15] you claim that there is a certain global crisis in how we understand citizenship. Can you say a bit more about that?

DS: In that paper, I was thinking about two features of modern citizenship regimes and how they are related. On the one hand, there is the breadth of citizenship, which characterizes its inclusivity. Who we let become a citizen is the prime operation here. On the other hand, there is the depth of citizenship: what rights does citizenship come with, and how robust is citizenship? Both the breadth of citizenship and the depth of citizenship have been shrinking. States have moved to tighten their naturalization requirements to make it more difficult for people to acquire citizenship or be dual nationals. One must pass language tests, integration tests, etc. On the other hand, I don't know as much about the Latvian context, but all throughout Europe, there has been this retraction of how much the state is willing to do for people's social rights. The social welfare state has been gradually eroding. You have narratives of deservingness used as the frame through which welfare benefits are allocated, where we only want to give those who work hard or fit our dominant conception of a *good citizen* the benefits of social citizenship.

I think that these are two important challenges to citizenship. Sometimes people say that we need to restrict who has access to citizenship to preserve a robust welfare state because people won't be willing to give social benefits to, for example, immigrants or people who are from different nationalities. But I argue that political progressives should try to think about how to broaden and deepen citizenship at the same time. Just to take the case of Latvia, it is a country that needs demographic growth in order to sustain parts of its welfare state. That is true, and that involves greater openness to immigrants. We need the conception of who can be a member of a political community that is more ethnically and linguistically inclusive, that is more tolerant of diversity, rather than shrinking back into this national model.

Do you think this shrinking also has an impact on how we understand our freedom: political freedom, but perhaps also individual freedom more generally?

DS: There are a lot of disputes among political philosophers about how to understand the nature of freedom. In my view, the kind of freedom that matters most is what is sometimes called personal autonomy. Personal autonomy is being the author of your own life, and that has certain social and political preconditions. For example, living in a context where you can make meaningful choices and pursue a range of different life options, but also being insulated from arbitrary power and domination, like not being subject to the control of your life by your boss, not being subject to the arbitrary whims of a border guard who determines whether or not you can settle. The pressing question is not so much which forms of freedom are valuable, but what are the distinctive

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15 Sharp, Daniel (2026). Immigration and Social Citizenship in Times of Crisis: Deepening and Broadening Citizenship. *Ethics & Global Politics,* No. 19(2), pp. 11–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/16544951.2026.2660465

contemporary threats that are posed to freedom? In my view, these are myriad. Obviously, there are external threats to being free people in a free state who can author their own political institutions. That is what people are worried about when they are worried about interference by Russia, for example, or increasingly the United States as a nefarious actor at the global level. But there are also internal threats. When we think about the rise of far-right parties throughout Europe, these are parties that often seek to capture the state and use it for essentially corrupt and personalist ends, to undermine the rule of law. Think of what happened in Hungary under the Orban years as a prime example of that. This too poses a severe threat to people's freedom, not only their personal liberty, but also core liberal freedoms like the rule of law. And then there are all the newer threats like the oligarchic political influence by wealthy elites, which is becoming an increasing problem everywhere; or the threats associated with new forms of technology like people manipulating algorithms on large platforms, controlling our access to information and shaping our identities in ways that we don't really have control over. For me, the most interesting questions are not how we understand freedom, but how we diagnose the challenges of domination that are posed by the contemporary world, and what we can do to combat those challenges. What social and political institutions and what citizen response do we need to grapple with those problems.